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The author suggests that the best guidance programs are those which allow the professional counselor the largest amount of time for counseling. The use of computers in the field of guidance assists the counselors in information storage and retrieval and provides for individualized instruction. However, the use of computers will require specific training of new counselors as well as in-service training for those now in the field. Furthermore, information concerning the use of computers in the field of guidance is lacking. The major areas in which counselors need training so they may utilize the support of computers to better serve the needs of students include: (1) the learning of technical skills, (2) the introduction and acceptance of the program, (3) the counseling of students, (4) the planning of educational programs, and (5) the research and evaluation of guidance program objectives. Implications for future use of computers in the field of guidance are included. (JS)

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TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM 7

THE BARTLESVILLE SYSTEM

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TOTAL GUIDANCE INFORMATION SUPPORT SYSTEM

THE BARTLESVILLE SYSTEM

TGISS - TM No. 7

GUIDELINES FOR INSERVICE TRAINING

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GUIDELINES FOR INSERVICE TRAINING

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The chief purpose of the Bartlesville Guidance Information Support System is to provide the best possible guidance services to students. This will be accomplished by allowing professionally trained counselors to spend the largest proportion of their time in actually working with students, and with significant others who have contact with the students, rather than the counselors devoting a disproportionate amount of time performing clerical duties. It is also believed that information storage and retrieval will be more accurate and current, thus enabling students to make decisions that are more useful to them.

The use of computers to assist counselors not only in information storage and retrieval but also in student computer interactions during the decision making process will require certain changes in the counselor education process. This will be true in both initial training and in-service training of counselors who are now in the field. This paper will address itself to the topic of specific areas of training needed by counselors to effectively utilize computers. Primarily emphasis will be given to inservice training for the Bartlesville Project but with revisions the material could be applicable to other counselor education situations.

Counselor Education Programs

Perhaps the first step in determining new methods of counselor training is to look at existing counselor education programs. The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, a branch of the American Personnel and Guidance Association, includes an introduction to data processing and programming as an area of study needed by the prospective counselor. (APGA, 1964) This is included as part of the standards on training in research and evaluation rather than for the utilization by counselors of computers in their daily work with students.

A sampling of texts designed to be used in courses in principles and administration of guidance services which deal generally with the work of the counselor was made to see if the books contained material related to the use of computers. (Boy and Pine, 1968; Hill, 1965; Hummel and Bonham, 1968; Hutson, 1968) This sampling does not represent the total range of available material, but of the four books surveyed only one contained material on the use of computers by the counselor. The text by Hummel and Bonham, Pupil Personnel Services in the Schools, contains a chapter on data processing. Objectives listed by these authors for data processing in education are:

(1) to provide individualized instruction;

(2) to perform clerical chores of pupil accounting and reporting;

(3) to analyze data so meaningful information is available;

(4) to conduct simulation of models; and

(5) to keep a closer touch with the characteristics and needs of each individual. (Hummel & Bonham, 1968).

Hummel and Bonham, though not writing in detail on data processing, were attempting to assist the counselor as he utilizes new methods of improving his services to students.

If the texts surveyed are representative of most of the books now available and if the professional studies suggested in the standards for counselor education are to be fully implemented, it would seem that counselors will need further education in the use of computers. Educational programs generally include counseling theory, organization of guidance, vocational development, human development, pupil appraisal, statistics and research, and supervised practice. Unless special programs are planned, training in the use of such technology as the Bartlesville System will be employing is probably lacking.

Areas of Training

What, then, is the task in training counselors so they may utilize the support of computers to better serve the needs of students? The major areas of training would appear to be:

1. Learning technical skills of computer use.
2. Introduction and acceptance of technological assistance by counselors, teachers, students, and parents.
3. Counseling with students involving the new dimension of a machine.
4. Planning educational programs.
5. Research and evaluation.

Since the Bartlesville System will be using the computer initially for storage of information about students the major emphasis in this paper will be on this aspect. However, the last section of the paper will look to some future uses of computers.

Learning Technical Skills

Only when counselors are comfortable with the hardware involved in using computers will they make the best use of computers to assist individuals. This area of training can of course be handled best by a specialist in the use of computers. Though the counselors will not be involved with the actual operation of the central computer they need to be able to use the terminal located at the school to retrieve information about students and to provide additional information to the storage bank.

This training can best be accomplished by lectures, demonstrations by persons skilled in operating the terminals, and finally by practice by the counselors in retrieving and adding information about individuals. Enough practice of this nature should be given so that the counselor performs these tasks in a fairly automatic fashion. Since the counselor may also be involved in training teachers and students in using the terminals, he should possess at least elementary knowledge of the total functioning of the computer system.

Introduction and Acceptance of Program

Not all people, including counselors, will be ready to accept the introduction of a machine such as the computer into the school. The fears

that many persons have of depersonalization and of invasion of privacy are realities which the counselor must be prepared to face.

Counselors must first face their own feelings about the introduction of the computer in their guidance program. One means of accomplishing this would be through group interaction with a group leader who is not directly involved in the school system. During this time counselors would be free to discuss any reservations they may have about the new system--these may range from being unsure of using the hardware to concerns about their own role identification as a counselor when a machine such as a computer is involved in the guidance process.

It will next be necessary for counselors to present the program to others in a manner that will enlist their cooperation and gain acceptance for the new program. Various means may be used to introduce the program to the school and community. Written materials explaining the Guidance Information Support System would be helpful. These materials could include a description of the types of information stored in the central computer, provisions for insuring privacy of information about students, information related to economy in storing data, more effective use of counselor time, and the advantages of being able to deal with more variables in arriving at educational and vocational decisions.

Large group meetings for teacher, student, and parent groups should also be planned. These meetings could be utilized to show the way that the counselor would use the terminal in storing and retrieving data about students. Role playing a counseling interview in which the counselor has

used the computer terminal to prepare for the interview and present information to a student would also be valuable.

Counselors should then provide time for individuals and for small groups to gain further information about the new program. This would also allow students, teachers, and others to have an opportunity to express their feelings and concerns about the new system.

Counseling With Students

An almost universal complaint of high school counselors has been that record keeping, scheduling, and other clerical duties prevent them from the very important function of actually counseling with students. A primary value in using the computer in recording information and scheduling is to free the counselor so that more of his time may be spent in direct contact with the students. The counselor will also have available to him information that is accurate and up to date. A study by Seals (1968) of sub-roles characteristic of high school counselees revealed that 75% of the time in counseling interviews was involved in the sub-roles of information giving, exploration, information gathering, and conversation. When the student was concerned with an educational-vocational problem he was most likely to be in the information-gathering sub-role. It would appear that the computer, through information processing, can be of invaluable assistance to both the counselor and the counselee.

The use of the computer in the counseling process may have several implications for counselors. First, the fact that the counselor will have

rapid and easy access to information about students should enable him to be aware of the progress of students and spot problem areas before they become more complicated. Though counselors have traditionally waited for students to come in for counseling, the counselor may now need to take the initiative by inviting students to talk with him as he sees possible problem areas developing.

It is possible that many counselors who have been burdened with clerical tasks will need some assistance in improving their skills in the counseling process. Certainly, the computer will not change the basic elements of the counseling process of empathy, acceptance, genuineness, etc. The greater amount of time available for counseling, however, will place greater demands on the skills of the counselor in creating the necessary relationship and in providing needed information to students. One means of beginning the counseling improvement program would be to utilize some of the techniques of microcounseling. Ivey and others (1968) report on counselor training involving this technique. Certain aspects of counselor behavior, such as attending to the client, are selected for study. The counselor-in-training counsels with a volunteer client for 5-minute interviews. A supervisor and the counselor study the recorded interview to find ways of improving the counselor-client interaction. The counselor, then, immediately interviews the client again and incorporates the ideas gained from the first interview. Another value that can be gained is that the client can also discuss with the counselor the impact of the interview on the client. The types of counselor

behavior that could be isolated for study are, attending behavior, reflection of feelings, presenting information to the client, and terminating an interview.

Following microcounseling sessions it would be desirable to use some recordings of actual interviews made by the counselors. This could be done with individual counselors initially, followed by meetings in which all of the counselors in a building would listen to tapes together. Counselors may be hesitant in the beginning to listen to their tapes with other counselors; but if a cooperative learning climate can be established, this procedure would be invaluable in maintaining skills in counseling.

Counselors will have access to a print out giving much information about the counselees they will be seeing during the day. The emphasis should be on utilizing many variables and determining alternative courses of action as they are learning to use this information to enable clients to make good decisions concerning their present and future. When alternatives are considered rather than one answer, the decision is still with the student, but it is a decision based on reliable information. Counselors should "think out loud," and record themselves as they review the information relevant to a student before a counseling session. This would help the counselor be more aware of the reasons for his selection of alternatives available to the student.

Planning Educational Programs

The technical aspect of scheduling will be taken care of at the central computer. The job at the remote terminal will be one of feeding essential information to the computer. Since the computer can handle more variables than people can, the scheduling process should be improved. Variables such as work schedules of students, extra-curricular activities, abilities of students, past grade records, and student preferences for courses and time can be taken into account rapidly and individual needs provided for. Faculty study of variables that lead to success in a particular course will be needed so that meaningful data will be used in the scheduling process.

Research and Evaluation

Most of the research in counseling has been conducted under the auspices of universities rather than by counselors on the job. The factors responsible for this have been time pressures and problems associated with collecting and analyzing data. With the assistance of the computer in gathering and analyzing data one major obstacle will be removed.

It would seem that any school system which desires to improve the effectiveness of its guidance program through research and evaluation will need to carefully look at the program objectives. Next, plans can be made concerning the area or areas of the program to be researched. A book that could be utilized by the counselors in designing research projects is Research Guidelines for High School Counselors, written by a

committee of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. This book outlines various areas to be researched in school guidance and provides assistance to counselors in designing and carrying out research. It seems certain that worthwhile contributions can be made by those school systems who possess the capability of maintaining a complete file of information about students.

The Future

That counselors will be using computers to assist them in their counseling seems inevitable. The precise use in the future cannot be predicted, but there are many exciting possibilities. Easy transfer of information from one school to another both within a school system and from one school system to another seems almost a necessity in our mobile society. Students are often forced to mark time in a new school situation because data is not readily available to the school to which they are transferring.

Students can learn to utilize the computer themselves for information gathering and use their knowledge with the counselor in planning. With more time available to the counselor for counseling, students with personal-social concerns should get assistance from the counselor when they need it--not "next semester after grade-point averages are figured." With more research and evaluation done by counselors, better information should be available concerning effective and ineffective practices. Though computers alone will not provide a guidance program that is effective for all, the Total Guidance Information Support System may be used by counselors to provide counseling that is truly developmental.

Summary

In this paper suggestions have been given for training counselors to utilize the computer in providing guidance services in the schools. Perhaps the training at this time will not be radically different, but rather we must stress the professional skills needed, both humanistic and technical. Technological advances will make it very difficult for a counselor to say, "I can't do my work because I'm a glorified clerk."

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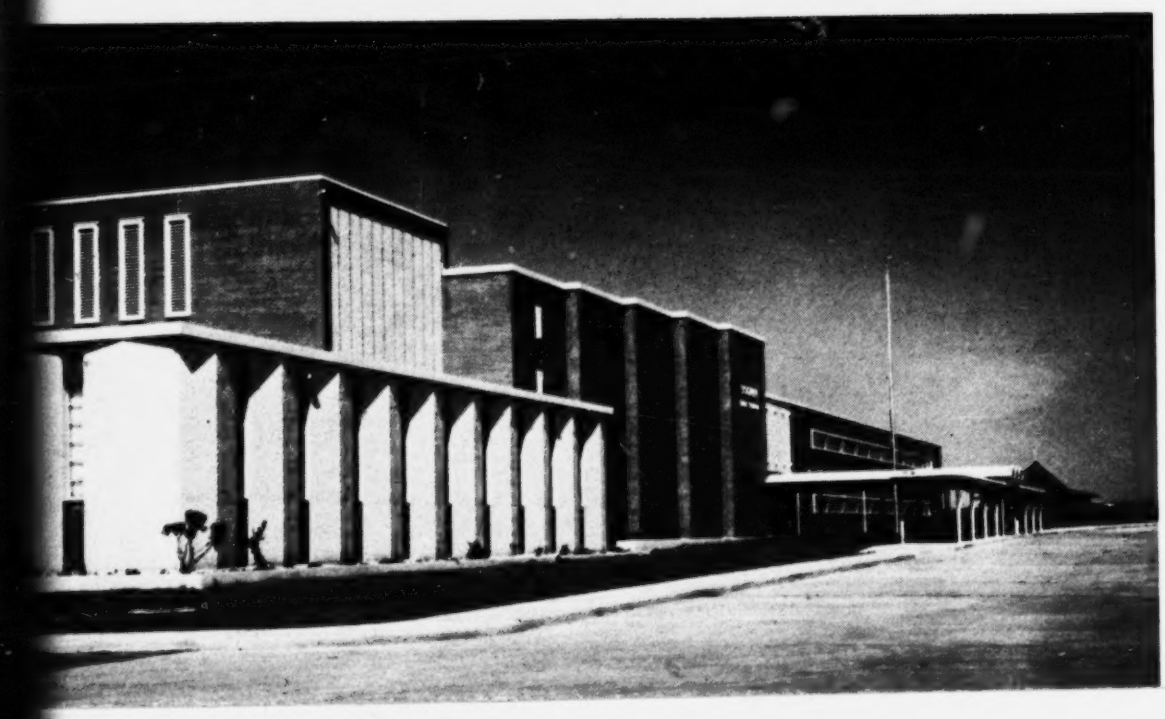
Schools In Transition

The Bartlesville Public Schools are pioneering a Total Guidance Information Support System for the Schools of Tomorrow.



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